

TRACKING

Closing the “Environmental Health Gap”

In 2000, the Pew Environmental Health Commission exposed an “environmental health gap” — a lack of basic information needed to link environmental hazards and chronic disease — and called for a nationwide system to track and combat environmental health threats.

Without a tracking system, environmental causes of chronic diseases will remain elusive.

Chronic diseases account for 70% of deaths in the United States. Environmental hazards are linked to many chronic diseases and conditions such as asthma, birth defects, and cancers.

In response, in 2002, Congress appropriated funds to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address this gap and has continued these appropriations

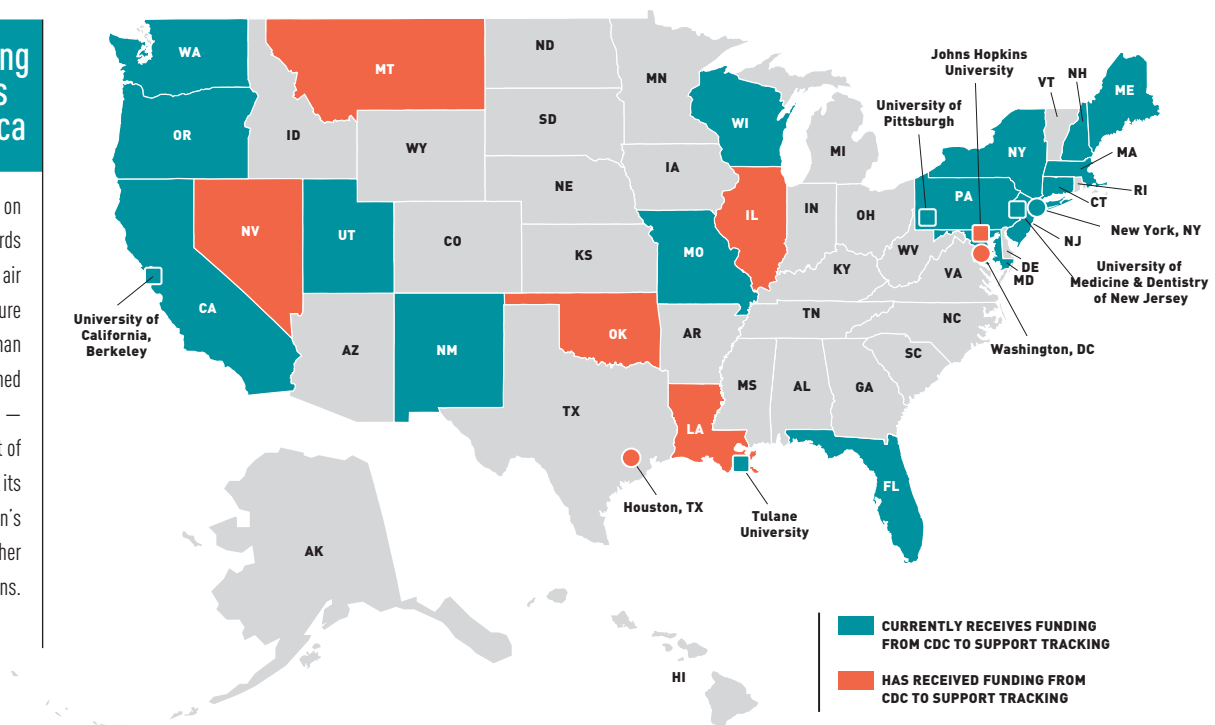
each year since. With these funds CDC, with federal, state, and local partners, has laid the foundation for a nationwide system to track hazards and the diseases they may cause.

As the first step in the development of this nationwide system from 2002-2006 CDC developed the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program, and awarded pilot grants to state and local health departments. These pilot programs and collaborations have already begun to pay off in faster responses to local environmental health problems.

Today, CDC and partners focus their efforts on the distribution of this critical information and are working hard to develop and launch a nationwide Tracking Network.

Tracking Across America

Tracking connects data on environmental hazards such as water and air pollution, human exposure and health effect. Human exposure is determined through biomonitoring — the direct measurement of a substance or its metabolites in a person’s blood, urine, or other specimens.



Keeping Track, Promoting Health... Connecting the Dots

hazard >> exposure >> health effect



THE IMPORTANCE OF TRACKING

- ❖ The Tracking Network, a collection of health and environmental data, is the corner stone of The Tracking Program.
- ❖ The Tracking Network will go live in 2008. Information in the network will be accessible to researchers, public health and environmental practitioners, policy makers, and the public.

BEFORE TRACKING

Even simple questions about environmental health would take months to answer

Data were held by many different government departments in individual silos

Environmental and health realms were separated administratively and philosophically

Health and environmental officials concentrated mainly on acute incidents such as chemical releases

CDC and state and local health departments concentrated on infectious disease surveillance

AFTER TRACKING

» Health officials can respond quickly, often within hours, to community concerns

» Standards and tools link these disparate sources of information and help ask important health questions

» Tracking brings these two fields together

» The presence and spread of compounds in the environment can be monitored over long periods of time

» These same surveillance skills can be used to identify environmental causes of illnesses and take preventive measures to protect health

Continued and increased support is critical to the success of the Tracking Program and the Tracking Network

Many states have yet to receive funding (and some states no longer receive funding) and do not have the resources to build a tracking program and network. Every state must be integrated into a network to allow everyone equal protection. The need for a nationwide tracking system has never been greater – especially with emerging issues such as climate change and the need for preparedness.



American Public Health Association

800 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

(202) 777-2742
fax: (202) 777-2534
www.apha.org